

CLASSIFICATION OF SURVEY BOAT OPERATORS IN THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Survey boat operators are allocated to the OPM Small Craft Operator Series, WG-5786, as they meet the series definition. However, since U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) floating plant positions are set aside from the Federal Wage System, they are evaluated by classification standards developed and approved by the U.S. Army. Special floating plant (other than hopper dredge) pay designators for use by the Department of the Army only were established by OPM on 12 Jun 92. They are described in the OPM FWS Appropriated Fund Operating Manual, Appendix V, as follows:

XF – Nonsupervisory
XG – Leader
XH – Supervisory or nonsupervisory

Survey boat operators are evaluated by different standards depending on the work assigned:

Department of the Army Manual of Evaluation Standards (DAMES) Operators of survey boats that are used for: 1) transporting personnel and materials to and from floating plant or survey sites; 2) the purpose of inspecting works of construction and miscellaneous sites of proposed construction; and 3) conducting hydrographic and reconnaissance surveys are classified by the DAMES and are assigned the XF pay designator.

Ladder Diagram (LD) Operators of survey boats that are used for the duties evaluated by the DAMES and also are used for: 1) serving as tenders towing other floating plant; 2) operate high speed cabin cruisers transporting high-ranking personnel on inspection tours and proving meals and living quarters; or 3) work at a comparable level are classified by the LD and are assigned the XH pay designator.

Although it would appear that an XF-5786-10 is a higher grade than an XH-5786-07, the pay for an XF-10 position is generally lower than that for an XH-07 position. The XF-5786-10 and XH-5786-07 benchmarks may be found at our web site: <http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/cehr/e/class/classhome.htm>. Click on floating plant.

The following guidance is provided to guide you in determining which standard is appropriate for evaluation.

DAMES:

Nature of the work:

Survey boats typically range in size up to 65 feet in length and carry an array of electronic and other equipment used to conduct hydrographic and reconnaissance surveys of rivers, harbors and waterways. They are used for transporting personnel and materials to and from floating plant (dredges, mat sinking units, etc.) or survey sites, without pushing barges, and for the purpose of inspecting current and proposed construction sites and disposal areas. They are equipped for locating wrecks and obstructions with electronic equipment such as side-scan sonar and magnetometers.

Inspection trips are usually conducted during daylight hours, but may involve remaining out overnight. A high degree of skill is required to operate in swift or shallow water to make hydrographic surveys, place channel markers or gauges and maneuver in traffic-congested areas. Work requires familiarity with channel locations and markers in the areas worked and knowledge of navigation rules for operating boats in traffic in the waterways traveled.

The operator is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the vessel and is required to make minor repairs to such equipment as diesel engines, generators, air compressors and auxiliary equipment aboard the vessel. The operator assists shop personnel during periods of major overhaul. The operator may direct the work of a deckhand or engineer if assigned to the vessel.

Grading Criteria:

Survey boat operator work is evaluated by the DAMES and classified as Small Craft Operator, XF-5786-10, if the duties, responsibilities and vessel characteristics match the benchmark for the XF-10 level. Some vessels are significantly smaller and/or work in protected waterways or lakes. A reduction of one or two grades is appropriate for these vessels. One grade may be added for vessels where the working conditions are higher than those described in the XF-10 benchmark. Whenever the duties performed do not match the benchmark job description, the Auxiliary Standard to the DAMES is solely used to evaluate the position.

LADDER DIAGRAM:

Survey boat operators that operate large survey boats and perform certain other duties on a regular and recurring basis in addition to surveying work are evaluated by the LD. There are two benchmarks in the LD that describe these additional duties: 1) serve as tenders towing other floating plant or 2) operate high speed cabin cruisers transporting high-ranking personnel on inspection tours and providing meals and living quarters. While other additional duties may be assigned that are comparable in complexity to these benchmarks, these duties should be reviewed to determine whether they are appropriately assigned to the XH-5782, XH-5784, or XH-5786 series.

Vessels that also serve as a tender:

Survey tenders that tow other floating plant on a regular and recurring basis in addition to the surveying duties described above under DAMES are evaluated using the Ladder Diagram and are classified as Small Craft Operator, XH-5786-07.

Vessels that are high speed cabin cruisers transporting delegations on regular and special inspection tours.

Survey boats that are high-speed cabin cruisers approximately 63 feet in length that transport high-ranking officers, civilian engineers, and official delegations, including members of Congress and influential persons, on regular and special inspection tours are also evaluated using the LD. Operators of these vessels provide for the general welfare and comfort of passengers, including the furnishing of meals and living quarters. The operator requisitions all necessary supplies for the operation of the boat and for serving of meals to personnel aboard on inspection trips. These survey boats are classified as Small Craft Operator, XH-5786-07.

In summary:

Survey boats that perform the following duties without using barges: 1) hydrographic and reconnaissance surveys of rivers, harbors, and waterways; 2) transport material and supplies to and from floating plant or survey sites; and 3) transport personnel for the purpose of inspecting works of construction and miscellaneous sites of proposed construction, are evaluated by the DAMES. Survey boats that 1) also serve as tenders towing other floating plant; 2) are high-speed cabin cruisers transporting high-ranking personnel on inspection tours, and providing meals and living quarters; or 3) work of comparable complexity are evaluated by the Ladder Diagram.